



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

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SBA Women's Business Center Director Wins Wisconsin SBA 2007 Women's Business Champion Award

Independence: **Renée Walz** has won SBA's Wisconsin 2007 Women's Business Champion Award. Renée has been serving entrepreneurs for over 25 years through her work with community action agencies, YWCA's and Wisconsin's technical college systems.

As Director of Business Development for Western Dairyland since 1993, she is responsible for the Western Dairyland's Business Enterprise Center and the SBA Women's Business Center. Renée has assisted more than 376 small business start-ups; supports the creation of more than 634 full-time jobs; implemented a regional Business Assistance Provider Network; developed training for direct and guarantee loan programs; and founded the Wisconsin Common Market – an online platform designed to gain easy access to very small Wisconsin enterprises wanting to conduct retail e-commerce. This site now hosts 235 small businesses. She is an effective and influential advocate for Women's Business Center clients in her service territory of 3,100 square miles that include Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson and Eau Claire counties.

Renée believes that improving the climate for entrepreneurship in Wisconsin is key to improving the environment for women-owned businesses, and the business climate is key to improving the financing and lending opportunities for women. It's tied to removing the complication and barriers for eligible women-owned businesses to become federally and state certified to do business with the government. As a member of the Association of Women's Business Centers, she seeks to educate our legislators on the economic impact of woman owned businesses in Wisconsin and the nation.

In 2006, Renée served on the Lt. Governor's Wisconsin Women's Business Enterprise Certification committee. The committee focused on creating a streamlined set of qualifications and processes that will encourage eligible women-owned businesses to become certified by the state to open state contracting opportunities. She also advocates for women owned micro-businesses. The micro-business is the one that grows and secures our small neighborhoods and communities and, in Wisconsin, accounts for approximately fifty seven percent of the jobs created.

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Western Dairyland's Women's Business Center, the Juneau County Economic Development Corporation, and Asset Builders staff are implementing a Biz-E youth project. This project will develop youth businesses and a youth entrepreneurship model that can be implemented across the State.

As SBA's Wisconsin Woman in Business Champion, Renée was judged on her active support for legislative or regulatory action designed to help small business; her efforts to increase business and financial opportunities for women; her managerial assistance to enhance women's business ownership, her volunteer efforts to strengthen the role of women owned businesses in the community, and other accomplishments demonstrating effectiveness in improving the environment for the creation and expansion of women owned businesses. Renée certainly meets these requirements and SBA is pleased to give her this award.

Renée will be honored at the SBA/SCORE Awards Presentation Breakfast on Friday, June 1, 2007 at the Country Springs Hotel in Waukesha. For more information on the awards breakfast, please contact Mary Trimmier at (414) 297-1093 or email her at mary.trimmier@sba.gov.

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